

James Kirke Paulding to Andrew Jackson, September 22, 1842, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

class=MsoNormal>JAMES K. PAULDING TO JACKSON. 1

1 This letter was followed by a number of others from Paulding to Jackson in his retirement. They are full of warm admiration and personal good-will, and came at infrequent intervals until Jackson died.

New York, September 22, 1842.

My dear General, I fear you will think me ungrateful in not having before availed myself of your kind request to write to you some times. I was about to do so at Louisville, when I was attacked by Ague and Fever, which had been hanging about me from the time I went down the Alabama River, and which has assailed me occasionally ever since, leaving me during the intervals, little inclination for employment either of mind or Body. To be sure I led it a pretty dance, and kept ahead so long as I continued in motion. But whenever I stopped any considerable time it was sure to overtake me, which it did at Louisville, at St. Louis, at Niagara Falls, at Rockaway, and so forth. I hope I am now rid of it, for this Year at least, as the cool weather is approaching, and one comfort of our long and severe winters, is that they put a stop to all shaking except with cold.

But notwithstanding all these drawbacks, and the persecutions of the committees, I derived infinite pleasure and profit too from my journey. It put to flight a mass of erroneous impressions, dissipated a thousand vulgar errors, and made me more proud of my country than I ever was before. When I reflect that I travelled nearly seven thousand miles on my own native soil without once "crossing my track," as you Back-woodsmen say, I feel an

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impression of the vastness and grandeur of my country which swells at my heart, and wakens a crowd of lofty anticipations, which not even present appearances can quell. I feel that there is scarcely a limit to the power and prosperity of our country unless like the irritated serpent, she turns and stings herself to death, and thus perishes by her own venom. The mode in which the Bastard Whigs now conduct their struggles for power, if successful in its repetition, must either end in Despotism or civil war. But, I am addressing one whose long experience and profound sagacity need no prompting of mine, and will pursue the subject no farther.

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You who have shaken hands with thousands, tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands of grateful and admiring friends, can realize the fatigues encountered by Mr. Van Buren in his progress. But I must do him the justice to say, he bore them all right manfully, and submitted to the Despotism of the committees with the resignation of a martyr. As for myself, after the severe skirmish at Columbia, I adopted a declaration of Independence, and insisted on being my own master. As we approached Louisville, during the whole day I felt exceedingly indisposed, and could scarcely keep my seat in the stage. When within two or three miles of that city, we were intercepted by a committee, which bade us "stand and deliver," or rather get out of the stage, and into a carriage with the aforesaid committee. Mr. Van Buren obeyed without a demur, but I refused on account of the state of my health. "O," said the chairman of the committee "you must get out, for we have got a speech for you." I replied, that was an additional reason for my declining, as it was impossible for me to answer except in a Dying speech." So I bade the Coachman drive on, and by that means kept in advance of the committee. As I approached the City the People concluding that Mr. Van Buren of course led the van, fired their guns, threw up their Hats and Huzzaed with all their might. In fact I forestalled all the honors, though I continued pointing to the rear to make them understand our relative positions. Thus you see, my dear General, I have been a great man for once in my life, and can now die contented in the arms of Dust and glory. I could give you various other instances of the

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persecutions of Committees, and relate how they gave Mr. Van Buren no time to cogitate his speeches, except while shaving himself, in consequence of which they were all cut short like unto his Beard. But I have matter more interesting to myself at least, and will imitate Mr. V. B. by cutting short these details.

I desire first to tell you of the source of pleasure I have laid up for myself for the short remainder of my life, in the recollections of my visit to the Hermitage; of your benevolent kindness, and unbounded hospitality; and above all, in the noble and touching example presented by its owner of a long and illustrious life, full of vicissitudes, and starred over with noble acts of Patriotism, closing with the mellowed glory of a mild and genial summer Evening in calm serenity, cheered by the recollections of the past, lightened up by the hopes of the future, and conscious that a glorious morn is coming. Such are my feelings when I recall my visit, always accompanied by a sort of hope, almost amounting to conviction, that you will yet live to witness the triumph of those principles, which you have so uniformly maintained not alone by words, but by actions, labours, and sacrifices.

Another source of pleasing recollection, is the domestic ease, and happiness, which reigned throughout your Household, and the affectionate devotion of your family. For this I apprehend you are not a little indebted to that excellent and admirable woman your Daughter in Law, of whom I shall say nothing more than that she fulfils all her duties with 0194 170 a smile and possesses a disposition so happily compounded as never to be ruffled except when asked to sing. She must not think I flatter her, for I am naturally inclined the other way, and feel great difficulty in bringing myself to do justice to good people.

When you kindly requested me to write to you, it was with a frank acknowledgement of your inability to answer me. I am content with the pleasure of writing to you, but it would add much to it, to know that my Letters are received. If Mr. Jackson would merely say so,

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and that you are well, and you would frank this Letter, I should be gratified to the full extent of my wishes.